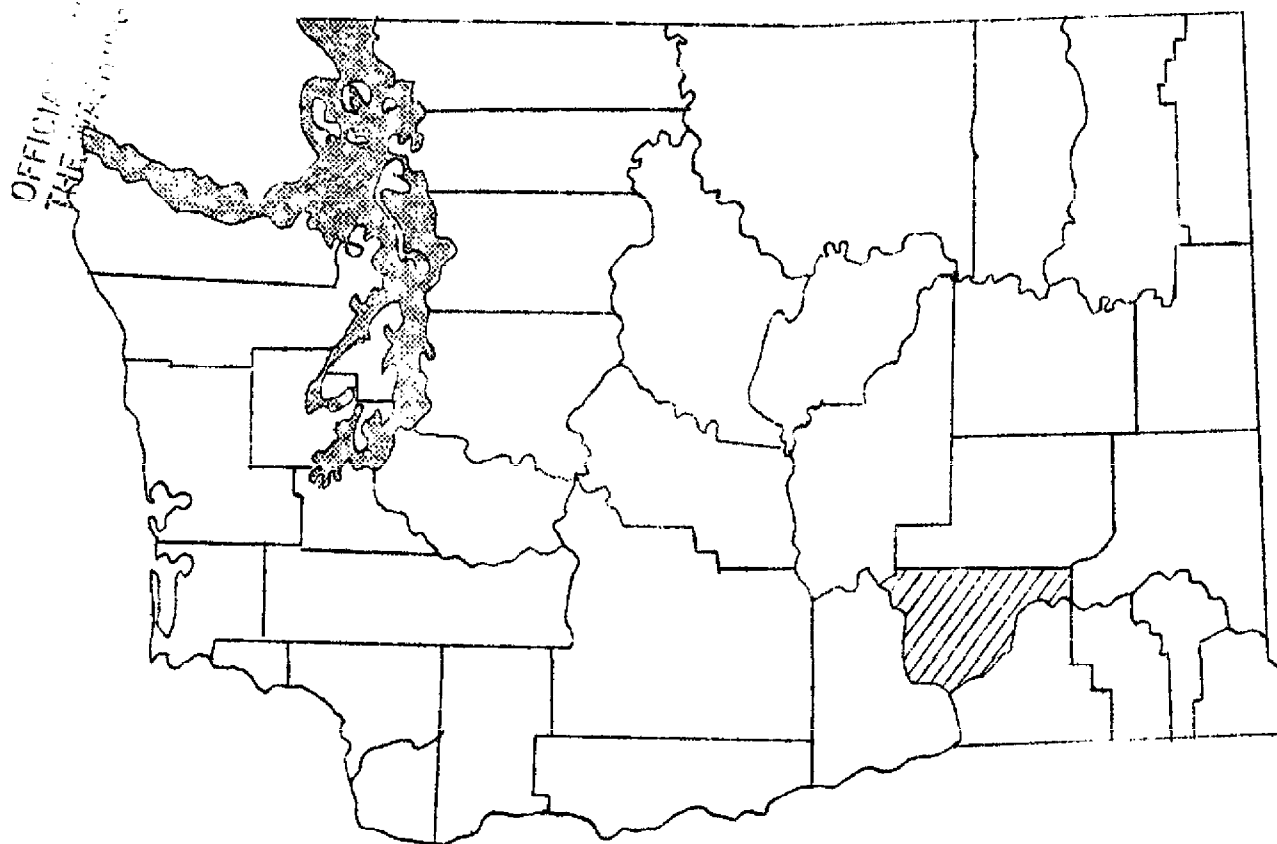


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FRANKLIN COUNTY AGRICULTURE WASHINGTON

COUNTY AGRICULTURAL DATA SERIES
1966



WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
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FOREWORD

This bulletin on Franklin County is one of a second edition series devoted to presenting the history and present nature of agriculture in each of the thirty-nine counties of the State of Washington. The original series was initiated in 1956 by the Washington State Department of Agriculture under the Research and Marketing Act of 1946.

County agricultural data books are intended to serve a variety of needs. Continually changing conditions in a dynamic state such as Washington require constant planning by groups and individuals, especially in the field of marketing agricultural products. Knowledge of land resources, population and agricultural-economic trends in a local area such as Franklin County is of great value. This book will be useful for reference in public and private instruction by social studies teachers. It has been devised also to inform adults interested in knowing more about their immediate area.

Selected geographic facts, agricultural history, population trends and statistical data are included to give an overall appreciation of Franklin County. Enumerations of the United States Census of Population and Agriculture are summarized to give a perspective of development since the establishment of Franklin County. Facts on topography, soil, climate and forest which influence farming are integrated from surveys and reports of government agencies. Estimates of leading crops by years since 1939 by the Washington Crop and Livestock Reporting Service provide a measure of the trend in the agriculture of the county farm industry.

Acknowledgement is accorded the professional work of several persons. Immediate direction was under Emery C. Wilcox, Agricultural Statistician in Charge, Field Operations Division, Statistical Reporting Service, United States Department of Agriculture. Research involved in up-dating and revising the original information and the preparation of the manuscript of the second edition of the Franklin County bulletin were performed by Howard W. Chadwick, Research Analyst, Washington State Department of Agriculture. Editing of the first draft of the present bulletin was done by Emery C. Wilcox. Agricultural Statisticians of the Washington Crop and Livestock Reporting Service gave valuable assistance. Marion L. Ware, Washington State Department of Agriculture, typed all the textual and tabular material and prepared the graphs. The bulletins were reproduced and assembled by members of the clerical staff of the Washington Crop and Livestock Reporting Service.

Olympia, Washington
March 1, 1966

Donald W. Moos, Director
Washington State Department of Agriculture

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PART I

HISTORY OF FRANKLIN COUNTY AGRICULTURE

Introduction

Franklin County, important for irrigated cropland and dryland wheat farms, lies in the southern part of Washington's Columbia Basin. A land area of 806,400 acres places it 27th in size among Washington's 39 counties. Fairly level terrain makes most of the land suitable for irrigation, and the western portion is within the Columbia Basin Irrigation Project. Dryland wheat and other grain farming is carried on in the eastern portion of the county under a summer fallow system designed to make the most of scanty rainfall. The county's population in 1960 amounted to 23,342 persons of whom 14,522 lived in Pasco, the largest city and county seat.

From the 1880's to the early 1950's, Franklin County was primarily a wheat, cattle, and sheep producing area with only a few irrigated fields along the Columbia and Snake Rivers. The Columbia Basin Project, using irrigation water impounded by Grand Coulee Dam, caused significant changes in agricultural practices. The project was authorized by Act of Congress in 1943 to be developed by the Bureau of Reclamation of the United States Department of the Interior. Total land area involved amounts to about 2,500,000 acres, of which nearly half are considered suitable for irrigation. Nearly 400,000 acres were under irrigation by 1964 in Franklin, Adams, and Grant Counties. Nearly all of the Project's South District is in western Franklin County. This district comprises about one-fourth of the developed irrigated farmland in the Columbia Basin Project.

The county has been among the state's top ten for many years in wheat and barley acreage. Although these are still the most important crops, irrigation development has resulted in steadily increased acreages of field crops such as alfalfa, sugar beets, potatoes, and dry beans and peas. Income from sale of farm products increased from \$4,765,231 in 1949 to \$13,901,871 ten years later.

History

Lewis and Clark traveled down the Snake and Columbia Rivers in 1805, opening the area to further white exploration and settlement. Sacajawea State Park is now located at the junction of these two streams and the city of Pasco stands a few miles upstream. Fur traders of the British Northwest Company and Hudson's Bay Company followed the early explorers. The Columbia River served them as a waterway connecting Forts Okanogan, Spokane, and Vancouver.

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Nomadic Indian tribes who spoke the Sahaptin language roamed the area now in Franklin County. Bands of Walla Walla, Cayuse, Palouse, and Nez Perce camped on the river banks and grazed their horses on interior grasslands. Wild horses ranging the coulees and scablands were a major item of trade in the early 1800's. Chief Moses was prominent among Indians of this Big Bend country of central Washington.

Indian hostility and disputed territorial jurisdiction between Great Britain and the United States prevented agricultural settlement until 1860. Indians resisted white settlement and hostility developed after the 1847 Whitman Massacre in the Walla Walla Valley. This culminated in the Cayuse Indian War, a widespread conflict between 14 tribes in the Yakima Confederation and the U.S. Army. For a time, Americans were restricted from settling in central and eastern Washington. Governor Isaac Stevens of Washington Territory concluded the Treaty of Walla Walla with the Indian nations in 1855. The Yakima, Colville, and Spokane Reservations were established, the Indians pacified, and within five years white settlers were allowed into the Columbia Basin.

Concurrent with the Indian trouble was a boundary dispute with Great Britain over the territory north of the Columbia River. Britain claimed the area by virtue of fur trading activities around Puget Sound and along the Columbia. American settlement there was discouraged by the British until the present boundary along Latitude 49° North was established by the Treaty of 1846. Oregon Territory, including the present state of Washington, was created in 1848 and Washington Territory was formed three years later. Territorial boundaries were changed to the present state lines in 1863 by the creation of Idaho Territory. Statehood for Washington came in 1889.

Named in honor of Benjamin Franklin, Franklin County was created by the Washington Territorial Legislature on November 28, 1883. It was organized from the southwestern part of Whitman County to provide settlers in the Connell and Pasco areas with a nearer seat of county government.

Stockmen were the earliest agricultural settlers to operate on a commercial scale in the county. Herds were based on the Snake and Columbia Rivers and at interior springs and lakes such as Scootenai, Eagle, and Washtucna. Among the pioneer stockmen between 1880 and 1900 was Henry Gable, who raised horses around Scootenai Springs and Eagle Lake. F. D. Mottet was an early sheepman in the Connell and Kahlotus areas. Edgar Hoon was another sheepman, operating on the lower Snake River between Pasco and Walker. Gibson Savage raised cattle northwest of Pasco. Herds of cattle, sheep, and horses were driven to railheads near Walla Walla, Spokane, and to river ports at Pasco and Crab Creek.

The Northern Pacific Railway constructed a line from Spokane to Pasco, across Franklin County, and westward up the Yakima River toward Puget Sound between 1880 and 1884. Railroad construction camps created a new market for farm products. The Nagel brothers began irrigation farming at Ringold in the early 1880's, using water from the Columbia River. They hauled food supplies, hay, and grain to railroad camps at Pasco, Connell, Mesa, and Eltopia. These camps became townsites by 1900. The Connell Land Improvement Company in 1902 sank deep ground water wells to develop the Connell site and sought immigrants to settle in the wheat lands. The era of open range livestock operation began to decline.

As in other areas of the west, the Donation Land Law of 1850 - 1855 and the Homestead Act of 1862 helped open up the interior of Washington to farmers. The railroads had been granted considerable land along their rights-of-way by the federal government and much of this was sold to prospective farmers. These events brought many settlers to Franklin County, and the population rose from 486 in 1900 to 5,153 ten years later.

Another railroad - the Oregon Railroad and Navigation Company line - connected Pasco with tidewater land on the lower Columbia between 1894 and 1909. The Columbia River was bridged at Pasco by both railroads. Pasco became one of the most important railroad centers between Spokane and Puget Sound and the lower Columbia and was incorporated in 1901 with a population of over 1,000. Earlier, in 1891, the Pasco district development was started by organization of the private Pasco Irrigation District by Directors Fred Kurtzman, J.C. Helm, A.S. Brown, J. T. Durant, and L.M. Morgan. A pumping station was built to provide water from the Snake River for domestic use and irrigation.

Range and croplands of central and northeastern Franklin County were settled rapidly once the railroads were available. German immigrants took up many homesteads. Led by Reverend Adam Beuler, a group of German Methodists from Cincinnati and other midwestern cities began grain and livestock farming on Paradise Flats and in the Mesa and Connell districts. Prominent among these newcomers were the families of Frisnick, Kortmeyer, Panhorst, and Kluda. Homesteaders in the drylands sank deep wells for water. They raised cattle, sheep, and wheat for export. Rye was grown for a home-use bread grain. A 1900 Northern Pacific Railway report on Franklin County agriculture gave the following statistics: number of farms - 82; major crop - wheat (2,700 acres); livestock on farms - 44,900 sheep, 5,784 horses, and 414 cattle.

Agricultural expansion between 1910 and 1940 was slowed by drought, the depression, and fluctuations in wheat production and marketing. Farm abandonment was common and the number of farms dropped from 620 in 1910 to 363 in 1940. Farm acreage, however, showed less fluctuation, as many pioneer farms were consolidated into larger holdings. Population increased very slightly. Introduction of mechanization and the growth of summer fallowing forestalled a greater abandonment of dryland wheat farms. At the end of World War I in 1919 wheat acreage was about 102,000 acres. Census of Agriculture figures showed a drop to 80,000 acres by 1935. A boost to the agricultural economy resulted from a small irrigation development in the Pasco area, where water pumped from the Columbia and Snake Rivers allowed diversified crops such as fruit, alfalfa, and potatoes. Irrigated land amounted to 3,000 acres by 1940.

World War II brought a turning point in the county's economy. Military and defense industries employing thousands were established in the tri-cities area of Pasco, Kennewick, and Richland. Most important among these were the Hanford Atomic Works at Richland and a U.S. Naval Air Training Station at Pasco. Thousands of new workers moved in, causing Franklin County's population to double between 1940 and 1950.

Agriculture in the county acquired a new look in the early 1950's, as abundant irrigation water was made available through the Columbia Basin Project. Number of farms jumped from 331 in 1950 to 742 nine years later as new agricultural land was developed and previous large dryland farms were subdivided into smaller irrigation units. Average farm land value went from \$37.35 to

\$89.17 per acre during the same period. The county's population increased from 13,563 in 1950 to 23,342 in 1960. Although only medium-sized compared to other Washington counties, Franklin ranked fourth statewide in the amount of irrigated farmland in 1949 and was twelfth in the value of crops sold.

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